

Vocational/Technical Education in Nigeria: An Indispensable Tool for Resolving National Conflicts and Economic Development

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Abstract

Vocational/Technical Education is a system of education that is of utmost value in the attainment of a robust national development in Nigeria. This can be said to be crystal clear considering the fact that numerous nations of the world are now struggling assiduously and painstakingly in order to solidly embrace and entrench the culture of viable industrial development. The main thrust of this paper is Vocational/Technical Education in Nigeria: An Indispensable Tool for Resolving National Conflicts and Economic Development. In the paper, an attempt has been made to critically unearth the monumental roles that the vocational/Technical plays in resolving national conflicts and uplifting economic development in the country. Some of the fundamental roles that the paper meticulously highlights are employment opportunity, stimulation of technological and Industrial development, production of Independent handicap, reducing dropout, increasing earning capacity etc. However, the challenges confronting Vocational/Technical in Nigeria have been vividly elucidated. These comprised lack of qualified teachers, poor parental attitude, inadequate funding, failure of leadership, poor maintenance culture etc. Lastly, the paper comes out with conclusion and some incisive as well as constructive comments which serve as the panacea for resolving national conflicts and the concrete development of vocational/technical education in Nigeria. The recommendations contained in the paper are the provision of adequate, competent and highly educated teachers of vocational/technical education; creating awareness campaign for the enrolment of more students in vocational/technical schools; increase in budgetary allocation, the publication and production of more indigenous textbooks of vocational/technical education; the creation of conducive atmosphere for learning; the exercise of dynamic and exemplary leadership and lastly, there is the need for effective maintenance culture for the development of vocational/technical education in Nigeria.

Keywords:

Vocational/Technical education,
National conflicts,
Economic,
Development,
Monumental changes

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Background to the Study

The attainment of viable industrial development is one of the anticipated national development and cardinal goals of Nigeria as a nation. There are now several nations of the world that are seriously making gigantic moves to be among the industrially developed countries of the world and also exercise a tremendous power over world affairs. Some countries of the world such as Britain, Italy, Germany, France, U.S.A Japan, China etc. are acknowledged to be famous in almost all aspects of development. All the countries noted, strongly attached great value to Vocational/Technical Education. They also firmly believed, that is a solid pathway to the attainment of a vibrant industrial development. It can be vividly comprehended that Nigeria is not late in becoming industrially and economically developed. The fundamental issue of concern is 'political leadership'. The country is now in dire need of leaders who are exceedingly hardworking and merciful in steering the ship of the nation to the procurement of proper and sound socio-economic and political developments. The emergence of president Muhammadu Buhari as the elected leader of Nigeria can be considered as a striking example. With the firm support and the co-operation of the people of Nigeria to Buhari's administration, the country can move better.

This paper discusses about Vocational/Technical Education in Nigeria: An Indispensable Tool for Resolving National Conflicts and Economic Development. After the introduction, there is the conceptual framework. Here, the concept of vocational/technical education, economic development and national conflicts are presented clearly. There are also the role of vocational/technical education in ensuring robust economic national development and the resolution of conflicts. However, the challenges of vocational/technical education also constitute a part of the discussion in the paper. Conclusion and recommendations are tied in the paper.

Conceptual Framework

In order to gain a clearer understanding of this paper, the concepts of vocational/technical education, economic development and national conflicts have been clearly and adequately explained. The justification for that is to bring out the message of the paper with regard to the fundamental roles of vocational/technical education and challenges impeding the development of vocational/technical education and also, to provide concrete strategies that can be employed to resolve national conflicts so that sound economic development can be effectively and successfully attained in Nigeria.

Vocational/Technical Education

Many scholars have attempted to succinctly explain the concept of vocational/technical education and their ideas are from different perspectives. According to Aghenta and Egwuelu (1995:47) vocational education is a type of education which is concerned with the development of skills, knowledge and attitude necessary for success in any occupation. On the other hand, technical education is an aspect of vocational education that stresses the engineering aspect of vocational education such as electronic, electrical, mechanical and automobile. For Gordon (1999), vocational education is a practically illustrated and

attempted job or career skill instructions which he further stressed that there were different components that fall under vocational education. Some of the components comprised: agricultural education, business education, family and consumer sciences, health occupation education, marketing education, technical education, trade and industrial education. The vocational/technical education is also part of the general education that constitutes any form of education with the primary purpose of preparing people for a gainful employment in a recognized occupation (Okoro, 1993, Oranu, 1998). In the views of Denga (1983), vocational education is a form of education which specially prepares an individual to form his/her chosen occupation. Furthermore, Career Technology (2008) defined Technical education as a planned programme of courses and learning experiences that begins with exploration of career options, support academic and life skills and enables achievement of high academic standards, leadership preparation for industry, defined works, advanced and continuing education. According to Uwaifo (2009:13), vocational/ technical education is the training of technically-oriented personnel who are to be the initiators, facilitators and implementers of technological development of a nation. This is further explained by Ojimba (2013:26) who opionated that technical education is the formal training of persons to become technicians in different occupations.

From the foregoing analysis, it can be inferred that the vocational/technical education has a tremendous relevance in our modern societies. This is due to the fact that it is capable of providing adequate practical knowledge and skills that will sufficiently aid the nations or societies to be industrially developed. For societies that decide to imbibe the culture of vocational/technical education, there are plenty of opportunities for achieving huge success. They can find it very much easier to be economically developed and self-reliant.

Economic Development and National Conflicts

The concept of development generally, is relative. This entails that what is perceived to be development in one society may not be development in the other. Development is all about anything that can positively bring about changes in the societies. It may be in the area of education, agriculture, health, law, polity etc. The concept of development has been defined by Munasinghe (2004) as a process of improving the range of opportunities that will enable individual humans and communities to achieve their aspirations and full potential over sustained periods of time while maintaining the resilience of economic, social and environmental systems. On the other hand, the concept of economic development entails an aspect of development that is essentially concerned with the production of goods and services in the society (Alanana, 2006:12). It is also the economic development that propels the other aspects of development in every society.

National conflicts are also part of the key concepts of discussion in this paper. It is a blunt fact that conflict is something that is inevitable. As long as the societies or nations are persistently progressing, the conflict never ends and keeps on occurring constantly. According to sociological studies by Scott and Marshal (2005:220) conflict has always been central to sociological theory and analysis of the society. Therefore, conflict here

connotes a situation whereby societal group of people such as an ethnic group are engaged in a serious disagreement or argument. Other examples are the conflict between the Fulani herdsmen and farmers, the cattle rustling in Zamfara state and other areas of Nigeria. There used to be conflict between Muslims and Christians etc. The situation causes large loss of lives and tremendous destruction of valuable properties.

From the conceptual analysis above, it can be inferred that there is an inextricable relationship between vocational/technical education, economic development and national conflicts. The vocational/technical education aids in propelling economic development and when there is an economic development, the level of conflicts can be reduced to the barest minimum. Because, when people are gainfully and economically engaged, they have less time for conflict.

The Roles of Vocational/Technical Education in Resolving National Conflicts and Economic Development

It is a well-established fact beyond reasonable doubt that the vocational/technical education contributes immensely in resolving national conflicts and economic development in Nigeria. The fundamental roles it plays cannot be underestimated.

The following are some of the roles:

Employment opportunity: The vocational/technical institutions such as the Polytechnics, Monotechnics, Universities of Technology, Work schools and other skills acquisition centers are very indispensable. This is epitomized by the fact that they are sufficiently capable of providing practical vocational training and skills to the masses. With that, they can independently create job opportunities for themselves and be economically self-valiant (Akpakpan, 2016:166). In a situation whereby economic opportunities are adequately created for the people, the national conflicts are likely to be drastically minimized.

Stimulation of Technological and Industrial Development: The idea of technology here refers to the application of scientific knowledge to resolve practical human problems. On the other hand, the industrial development denotes the establishment of more and more functional industries that can sufficiently and conveniently offer prosperous employment/job opportunities to the masses. The vocational/technical education aids in no small measure in boosting rapid technological and industrial development. A striking example of this can be found in those advanced nations that admirably entrenched the culture of vocational and technical education. These comprise Britain, France, Germany, Italy, U.S.A, China, Japan etc. With the adoption of vocational/technical education in Nigeria, the country can competently produce engineering talents and promising students that can vigorously bring about socio-economic and political development.

Production of Independent Handicap: This is one of the vital role that the vocational/technical education play towards resolving national conflicts and economic development. According to Kwunaso (1998), the Vocational/Technical education

tremendously assists in national development through fighting against poverty, inflation, unemployment and political instability. It can also create skilled manpower who are efficiently and effectively equipped to convert a nation's natural resources into useful goods and maintain production for the benefit of the nation. It is strongly realistic that the production of independent handicaps paves way for resolving national conflicts and economic development in Nigeria.

Reducing Dropout Rate: The dropouts are the persons that leave school or college before they finish their studies successfully. In a situation whereby those people continuously live without sustaining their livelihood, they can notoriously become social miscreants in the society. The vocational/technical education here has a fundamental role to play because it can adequately assist in minimizing the dropout rate. In every society, there are some people that are not contented with the general education and for that reason, they do engage in vocational/technical education where they can adequately sustain their livelihood and be comfortably self-reliant (Okorieocha, 2014:193).

Increasing Earning Capacity: It has been adequately discovered that the vocational/technical education is significantly valuable in increasing the incomes of the people that have its skills because they are self-employed. By so doing, their standard of living can be improved substantially and also offer their generous contributions to national development. The issues of national conflicts can be peacefully resolved and boost economic development when there is continuous increase in earning capacity.

Improve the Nutrition of the citizenry: This is also part of the significant roles of vocational/technical education in resolving national conflicts and economic development in Nigeria. The concept of nutrition here vividly entails feeding and it is also a process by which the people receive food necessary for them to grow and be healthy. Researchers have indicated that there were numerous people that are severely malnourished in Nigeria because of lack of quality food or balanced diet that has potential nutritional value. It is here that the knowledge of "Home Economics" is highly required because it has intertwined relationship with vocational/technical education. The knowledge of Home Economics helps in preparing delicious and palatable balanced diet for the populace and improves their physical wellbeing and healthy productivity (Okolo Chai 2012:100). The vocational/technical education is also a paramount derive in reducing small business failures and it does that by equipping the Nigerian populace with vibrant entrepreneurship skills and attitudes that will aid in effective maintenance of the business.

Challenges Impeding the Development of Vocational/Technical Education towards Resolving National Conflicts and Economic Development of Nigeria

Beside the immense roles of vocational/technical education in Nigeria, there are also a plethora of challenges which obstruct the development of vocational/technical education in resolving national conflicts and economic development in Nigeria. The challenges would be briefly discussed and the solutions would also be adequately provided.

The Following Are Some of the Challenges:

Lack of Qualified Teachers: This is one of the formidable challenges deterring the development of vocational/technical education in Nigeria. Teaching basically entails the process of giving lessons or ideas to the students in a school, college or university. Effective teaching is paramount in aiding the students to achieve quality education (Ukommi, 2013:60). It was researched by scholars that lack of qualified teachers was one of the challenges of vocational/technical institutions of learning (Onwuka 2005:21). The supply of technical teachers is very short in the Nigerian schools. However, lack of competent and qualified teachers contributes abysmally in falling standard of vocational/technical education in the country (Okafor, 2012:11).

Poor Parental Attitudes: According to Aina (1999:1), Poor parental attitudes and of the society are manifested in low enrolment of vocational/technical education compared with enrolment in other courses. Many parents do not owe it an obligatory responsibility to provide proper guidance and counselling for their children (Nkulu, 2014:92). Consequently, the educational pursuits of children would be at stake. With the continuous intensification of vocation/technical education in Nigeria, innumerable parents would admire vocational/technical education and also offer valuable counselling for their children (Nwosu, 2013), (Okafor, 2011).

Inadequate funding: The insufficient funding has been the recurrent and seeming challenges of vocational/technical education in Nigeria. But the fundamental question that one would pose is that what is funding? Basically, funding connotes the budgetary allocation and a budget is a financial plan expressed in quantitative terms and used in controlling government's finances for a specified period of time usually a year (Ogbanje, 2010). The Federal Government's Funding of vocational/technical education actually is not something to write home about and it results in so many problems that hinder development (Oseni, 2012:11), (Amstrong, 2012:141). Furthermore, the National Bureau of Statistics 2013s stated that the Federal Government's budgetary allocation to education generally in the previous years 2007-2008 was less than 10%

Lack of Equipments and Workshops: In the fields of study such as the vocational/technical education, the equipment and workshops are the vital pre-requisites for the attainment of monumental development. The supply of equipment that can be utilized by the vocational/technical educators and students is acutely short and that is also the reason why they find it very difficult to work in the laboratories (Feiker, 2010:13). This is further coupled with non-chalant attitude of the government to organize workshops whereby important issues on vocational/technical education can be discussed for national development (Lawal, 2013:33).

Failure of Leadership: Leadership is a process of influencing the activities of an individual or group towards goals achieving in a given situation (Christopher and Larry 1978:10). Nigeria is a country that seriously requires an exemplary leadership for the solid development of vocational/technical education (Alabura, 2012:190). The sequence of leadership in Nigeria is a problem to the development of vocational education because it culminates into inadequate provision of basic equipment for effective teaching and learning in the country (Aliyu 2011:51).

Lack of Indigenous Text books: This is also a challenge that adversely hampers the development of vocational/technical education in Nigeria. The textbooks for teaching vocational/technical education cannot be adequately found and even most of the textbooks that are obtainable in the libraries are foreign (Effiom, 2014:9). However, the books are not specially published in such a way that they suit the African culture. The Federal Government of Nigeria does not also considerably show serious concern on the production of indigenous textbooks of vocational/technical education in the country (Iheanacho, 2016:96).

Poor Maintenance Culture: This is another formidable challenge that dismally bedevils the development of vocational/technical education in Nigeria. The concept of culture is relative. This signifies that what is perceived as a culture in one society may not necessarily be a culture in another society. Culture normally denotes a total way of life of a people or their manner of behaving. According to Yusuf (2012:11), there used to be a poor maintenance culture in most of the Nigerian vocational/technical institutions of learning and this is because the various equipment, libraries and workshops that are provided by the government are not adequately maintained. On the side of the government, there used to also be a lukewarm response in taking punitive actions against the people that carelessly vandalize the properties of the government and all these challenges adversely hamper the development of vocational/technical education in the country (Okere, 2012:41).

Conclusion

From all the discussions made in the paper, it can be vividly inferred that the vocational/technical education is a pre-requisite factor for the attainment of a highly advanced industrial development in Nigeria. When such kind of golden opportunity is achieved, more and more people or citizens of Nigeria from the six geo-political zones are likely to be adequately provided with job opportunities. With that, they can be self-reliant and self-sustaining. They can also contribute tremendously to the socio-economic and political development of the country. It has been indicated in the paper that, the vocational/technical education aids immensely in resolving national conflicts and enhance viable economic development. All these can be achieved via employment opportunity, technological and industrial development, production of independent handicap, reducing dropout, increasing the earning capacity as well as improving the nutrition of the citizenry. However, the paper also identified various challenges besieging the development of vocational/technical education in Nigeria. Some of the challenges comprise inter-alia lack of qualified teachers, poor societal attitudes, inadequate funding, lack of equipment and workshops, failure of leadership etc. In addition to that, the recommendations have also been clearly and sufficiently indicated in the paper.

Recommendations

The following are the major recommendations for resolving the development of vocational/technical education, national conflicts and propelling economic development in Nigeria:

1. It is fundamentally important that the government should strive persistently in ensuring that adequate, competent and highly qualified teachers are provided in our vocational/technical institutions. The essence of doing that is to promote efficiency and effectiveness.
2. There is need for government in Nigeria at Federal, State and Local Government level to create awareness or public enlightenment campaign for the parents and society so that their attitudes and behaviours can be changed towards supporting massive enrolment of students or candidates in vocational/technical schools in Nigeria. It is also an opportunity for resolving national conflicts and attaining economic development in the country.
3. Inadequate funding is one of the major challenges bedeviling the smooth progress of vocational/technical education in Nigeria. It is therefore, strongly urged here that the three tiers of government viz the Federal, State and Local Government levels should work inextricably in order to ensure the continuous increase of budgetary allocation on vocational/technical education.
4. In order to effectively enhance the teaching and development of vocational/technical education in Nigeria, there is the need particularly for the Federal Government of Nigeria to encourage the publication and production of more indigenous textbooks of vocational/ technical education and the books should be in accordance with the socio-cultural, political and economic milieu of the country. With that, the teachers and students of vocational/ technical will find it easy to thoroughly study and offer their contributions in resolving national conflicts and also facilitate the attainment of viable economic development in the country.
5. The government is anticipated to create a serenely beautiful atmosphere for comfortable learning of vocational/technical education in Nigeria. This can be successfully attained through the provision of modern equipment, workshops and other vitally important facilities.
6. One of the potent strategies that can be effectively employed to promote the development of vocational/technical education in Nigeria is through the exercise of exemplary leadership. As such, the country's political leaders should strive unflinchingly to stamp out social banes such as corruption, bribery and other forms of mismanagement and aggrandizement of resources.
7. Finally, there is the need for the government to inculcate in the masses the moral values of respect and make them to imbibe the good maintenance culture. With that, the properties of the government would be scrupulously preserved from rampant vandalization. This also paves way for the resolution of national conflicts and the solid enhancement of economic development in Nigeria.

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